

APPRECIATION FOR FEDERAL DISASTER RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, Maine people are no strangers to tough winters, but the ice storm we just endured struck a terrible blow. Damage will exceed \$100 million. When Vice President GORE toured the State, he said it looked like we had been hit by a neutron bomb. And that is a pretty accurate description. The damage from the ice storm which accumulated over several days snapped off telephone poles. We had 2,500 telephone polls in the State which needed to be replaced. It essentially dropped the forest canopy about 25 feet, the hardwoods broke off at the top, branches broke off, and they took power lines down with them all across the State. Some roads were impassable, blocked by fallen trees and downed power lines. Thousands of people were left in the dark and cold. Mr. Speaker, 600,000 people, one-half of the residents of the State of Maine, were without electricity for some time, and some of them had no power for as long as 2 weeks. As my colleagues can imagine, that can try the patience of even the toughest Yankee who has faced some very tough nor'easters. Thousands of families with no heat found themselves stoking up old wood stoves and huddling in front of fireplaces. For those who depend on well water, no electricity meant no pump, no pump meant no water. Those close to a pond or river hauled water in buckets. No running water meant no toilets, no bathing, no washing dishes or washing clothes.

I have to say that all of this produced a very brisk business in chain saws, generators and kerosene space heaters. Not only was the power out, but it was very cold. Our schools were closed for up to 2 weeks in different parts of Maine and daily life was disrupted for thousands of families.

During those 2 weeks, I went to a number of shelters in Maine and I want to tell my colleagues, there are some wonderful stories, hundreds of stories of people pulling together to help each other and make a community humanitarian effort. I will never forget certain aspects of my experience going into those shelters. There would be some older people, some on oxygen, on cots on one side of the room, a gym or some other facility, there would be younger kids being taken care of by their parents, there would be a soccer game in the middle of the gymnasium or the shelter, but I will also remember most, what I will carry with me as long as I live, is the look on the faces of the teenagers, many of whom had not volunteered I suspect for anything like this for a long period of time, but there they were, cutting up carrots, moving cots, bringing blankets, helping to move equipment, and making sure that other people were well cared for. It was

for them an experience that may help them understand their connection to others and the importance of community.

Fire and rescue crews went door to door in some places checking on townspeople, seeing who was okay; others took generators and portable generators and moved around from home to home warming up one home, unplugging the generator, going to another home, trying to keep as many people as possible warm, and as many pipes as possible from freezing. Our radio stations canceled normal programming and took calls around the clock; that was real helpful for building a sense of community, and television stations had special programs and hotlines.

We could not have done this without outside help, and I am here today to say thank you to the rest of the country.

Let me give some examples of how we were helped. Central Maine Power Company, our major utility, usually has 92 crews, and during the height of our resistance to this storm, we had 1,000 utility crews working. They came from Maryland and Delaware and North Carolina and South Carolina; they came from Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island and New York, they came from all over the East Coast and they provided an invaluable service. One truck had on it a sign on the side: Maine or bust. And they showed up. Some of those folks arrived from North Carolina at the Brunswick Naval Air Station and they were given jackets from L. L. Bean, donated by L. L. Bean. They had worked on utility lines all their lives, some of those people, never in such cold, and I just want to say that we could not have done it without the assistance of people from other States.

I would also say that the response of FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, was outstanding. James Lee Witt came to the State, he and his people did an extraordinary job. The Federal Government stepped forward when it was needed and helped Maine people when they needed it most.

I just will say in conclusion, I will never see scenes on television of a flood or hurricane and not remember how the people of this country stood up for people in Maine when we needed help.

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MANAGED HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SNOWBARGER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to start out this afternoon by saying how happy I was with the President's State of the Union address last evening and the reaction of Congress on both sides of the aisle.

The President stressed his pro-family, pro-child message. It is an agenda that I think that everyone can get behind. It will have the strong support of the American people. And it is very important, I think, that in order for us to enact this agenda, that we get the Republicans, both the leadership and the rank and file, together with my Democratic colleagues so that we can enact what are essentially common sense proposals in 1998.

I, along with several of my colleagues who will join me this afternoon, just wanted to call attention to two points that the President raised with regard to health care reform which I think are particularly important.

One is managed care reform. The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KLINK), who is going to be joining us soon here, stressed that during the break, during the congressional district work period. Congressman KLINK, myself, and others had a number of forums in our districts where we heard from our constituents about the problems with managed care, with HMOs and managed care organizations.

I thought it was particularly interesting last evening that when the President mentioned the need for consumer protections and a consumer Bill of Rights to deal with managed care organizations, that the response was overwhelming. I think it had a better response from the Congress, again on a bipartisan basis, than almost anything else that he talked about. I think that is because we are hearing from our constituents and they are telling us the problems and the horror stories that exist with regard to existing managed care organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to at this point yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania who I was listening to his comments before and they are really appropriate in terms of some of the problems that we hear from our constituents.

Mr. KLINK. Mr. Speaker, I thank my distinguished friend from New Jersey.

The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) and the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) and I and others have had these discussions for years. We have watched as this situation with insurance and availability of insurance, choice of doctors, all of this has deteriorated greatly.

But it was 1995 when probably the most horrendous story that I had ever come into contact with occurred. I became aware of a 4-year-old boy named Sean Brake from a place outside of my district called Plum Borough. The local TV station was doing a story about the fact that Sean's father worked for the insurance company and Sean at the age of 4 had gotten a rare form of cancer, but it was a highly treatable form. With a bone marrow transplant which would cost somewhere around \$200,000 or more, there was a 90 percent chance that Sean would survive, according to the people at Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh,